U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, CO 81625-1129

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA-NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2010-0048 EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER/LEASE NUMBER:

PROJECT NAME: ACE #7 MINING CLAIM RECLAMATION

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NE¼ section 8, T.11N., R.91W. 6th P.M.

APPLICANT: Little Snake Field Office

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The proposed action is subject to the following plan:

> Name of Plans: Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (ROD) approved on April 26, 1989.
>
> Remarks: The proposed reclamation project would be located within Management Unit 6 (Northern Great Divide) of the Little Snake Resource Management Plan. The objectives of Management Unit 6 are to maintain and improve critical habitat for sage grouse, mule deer and pronghorn antelope. Other resource uses/values within this unit will be allowed consistent with the management objectives for this unit.

The proposed action was reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3). The proposed action is in conformance with the objectives for this management unit.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: 43 CFR 3809 regulations allow mineral development as long as unnecessary or undue degradation of the public lands does not occur, and the disturbed areas are reclaimed. A placer claim was operating in violation of the 43 CFR 3809 regulations and unduly degraded the public lands. The disturbed areas of the placer claim were not reclaimed. Unauthorized workings, buildings and debris remain; removal of the buildings and debris, and reclamation of the disturbed areas would rehabilitate the degraded public lands.

PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS: A copy of the reclamation project is available at the Little Snake Field Office, and may be viewed during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES: All structures related to occupancy would be demolished and disposed of in an approved landfill or recycling center. All surface disturbances would be re-contoured and re-seeded. A concrete dam structure on Timberlake Creek would be demolished and disposed of on site, or in an approved landfill or recycling center. The unauthorized earthen dam that was constructed on Timberlake Creek would be removed and the area re-contoured and re-seeded.

The following project design features will be implemented to help minimize impacts to water quality, floodplains, riparian and wetland areas, and soils to the extent possible:

- Minimize the use of heavy equipment in the immediate riparian zone by using equipment properly sized for the job.
- Perform the work when soils are dry to reduce soil compaction and damage to any existing native vegetation that could assist in recovery via natural recruitment.
- Depending on the level and extent of disturbance, plantings and seeding may be required. However, if there is adequate and vigorous native vegetation nearby, natural recruitment would be the preferable means of revegetation, as plants are already established and suited for the site and the risk of accidental weed introduction is reduced. Any seeding/planting effort will require close follow up to prevent weed introductions.
- Following dam removal, contour the stream banks and adjacent floodplain to resemble a similar slope and aspect as upstream reaches using similar substrate to facilitate functional recovery of the impacted riparian area.
- Perform the work in low-water conditions, install sediment fences or straw bales/waddles on creek banks, and seed/plant disturbed areas as soon as possible with native perennial species following excavation work to reduce bank side erosion and soil loss.
- Temporary use or staging areas should avoid all riparian, spring, and wetland locations.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: The site would not be reclaimed and habitat would not be restored. Degradation to the public lands would not be repaired and the degradation would continue.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES

CRITICAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The project area does not lie within any special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Vehicular and equipment access on the existing road as well as activities associated with the construction and reclamation earth-moving process would result in releases of particulate matter (dust) and exhaust emissions, but this would be minor and short-term and would not have long-term adverse impacts to the overall air quality of the area.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: This alternative would have no further effect on air quality.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 4/8/10

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: Not Present

Environmental Consequences: Not Applicable

Mitigative Measures: Not Applicable

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison, 3/3/10

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Affected Environment: Cultural resources, in this region of Colorado, range from late Paleo-Indian to Historic. For a general understanding of the cultural resources in this area of Colorado, see *An Overview of Prehistoric Cultural Resources, Little Snake Resource Area, Northwestern Colorado*, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resources Series, Number 20, *An Isolated Empire, A History of Northwestern Colorado*, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resource Series, Number 2 and *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Northern Colorado River Basin*, Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists.

Environmental Consequences: The proposed project, Ace 7 Cleanup project, has undergone a Class III cultural resource survey:

Morton, Ethan, 2010. A Class III Cultural Resource Inventory for ACE-7 Cleanup Project, BLM-Little Snake Field Office, Moffat County, Colorado (BLM 10.45.2010)

The survey identified one eligible to the National Register of Historic Places cultural resources. The proposed project may proceed as described with the following mitigative measures in place.

Mitigative Measures: It is recommended that site segment 5MF4122.2 be flagged for avoidance and a site monitor should be present during activities within 100 meters of the site. Fill materials should not be excavated from locations near the site segment that will impact or degrade the Integrity of Setting.

The following standard stipulations apply for this project:

1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are encountered or uncovered during any project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate vicinity of the find and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO) at (970) 826-5000. Within five working days, the AO will inform the operator as to:

- Whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- The mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the identified area can be used for project activities again; and
- Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) (Federal Register Notice, Monday, December 4, 1995, Vol. 60, No. 232) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone at (970) 826-5000, and with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

2. If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation costs. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 6/30/10

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: The proposed action would be located in an area of isolated dwellings. Oil and gas development and ranching are the primary economic activities.

Environmental Consequences: The proposed action would not directly affect the social, cultural or economic well-being and health of Native American, minority or low-income populations. The project area is relatively isolated from population centers, so no

populations would be affected by physical or socioeconomic impacts of the proposed action.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Barb Blackstun, 3/5/10

FLOODPLAINS

Affected Environment: A small, unauthorized concrete dam was constructed on Timberlake Creek by the permit holder to channel water into a ditch that was used for placer mining operations east of the creek.

Timberlake Creek, which flows through a portion of the project site (Site B), has a floodplain that rarely floods. The rest of the project area is not likely to flood.

Source: USDA-NRCS Soil Data Viewer version 5.2.0016: http://soildataviewer.nrcs.usda.gov/

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Removing the dam on Timberlake Creek would cause short-term disturbance to floodplain soils and vegetation, however it would allow natural processes, such as sediment transport and flooding, to eventually resume as they were prior to the dam construction. Generally speaking, dams cause a narrowing and deepening of the river/creek channel below the impoundment that ultimately results in reduction of channel complexity, loss of sediment storage within certain reaches downstream, narrowing of riparian habitat and isolation of the floodplain from the river or creek since overbank flooding is reduced or eliminated. Following the project design features would minimize impacts to floodplains.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Although temporary disturbance to the floodplain would not occur under this alternative, over the long term floodplain health and connectivity downstream of the dam would continue to degrade, eventually causing downstream reaches of Timberlake Creek to not meet riparian and land health standards.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 4/8/10

INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Invasive species and noxious weeds occur within the affected area. Downy brome (cheatgrass), yellow alyssum, blue mustard and other annual weeds are common along roadsides and on other disturbed areas. Canada thistle and several species of biennial thistles are known to occur in this area. Halogeton has also become a noticeable problem in the affected area, as well as other areas in the western portion of Moffat County. Russian knapweed and hoary cress (whitetop) have been found in the vicinity of this

project. Other species of noxious weeds are not known to be a problem in this area, but can always be introduced by vehicle traffic, livestock and wildlife. The BLM, Moffat County, livestock operators, pipeline companies and oil and gas operators have formed the Northwest Colorado Weed Partnership to collaborate efforts on controlling weeds and finding the best integrated approaches to achieve results. Additionally, the BLM is in cooperation with Moffat County's Cooperative Weed Management program to control noxious weeds on public lands. Principals of Integrated Pest Management are employed to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The surface disturbing activities and associated traffic involved with restoration of this site would create an environment and provide a mode of transport for invasive species and other noxious weeds to become established. Construction equipment and any other vehicles and equipment brought onto the site can introduce weed species. Wind, water, recreation vehicles, livestock and wildlife could also assist with the distribution of weed seed into the newly disturbed areas. The annual invasive weed species (cheat grass, yellow alyssum, blue mustard and other annual weeds) occur on adjacent rangelands and would occupy the disturbed areas. The bare soils and the lack of competition from a perennial plant community would allow these weed species to grow unchecked and can affect the establishment of seeded plant species. Halogeton is a noxious annual weed that could also occupy the disturbed areas. Halogeton would likely require intensive control with herbicides to prevent it from moving into adjacent rangelands. Establishment of perennial grasses and other seeded plants is expected to provide the necessary control of invasive annual weeds within 2 or 3 years. Additional seeding treatments of the disturbed areas may be required in subsequent years if initial seeding efforts are not successful.

The perennial and biennial noxious weeds in the area are less frequently established on the uplands but some potential exists for their establishment in draws and swales or areas that would collect additional water. The largest concern in the project area would be for these species to become established and not be detected, providing seed which can be moved onto adjacent rangelands. All principles of Integrated Pest Management should be employed to control noxious and invasive weeds on public lands.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: Weeds would not be introduced as a result of the reclamation activities. However, the bare soils currently existing at the site would not be reseeded and would therefore continue to be susceptible to infestation.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Christina Rhyne, 3/8/10

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2008-050 provides guidance towards meeting BLM's responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and

the Executive Order (EO) 13186. The guidance emphasizes management of habitat for species of conservation concern by avoiding or minimizing negative impacts and restoring and enhancing habitat quality. The LSFO provides both foraging and nesting habitat for a variety of migratory bird species. Several species on the USFWS's Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) List occupy these habitats within the LSFO. The project is located in the Northern Rockies Bird Conservation Region.

Specific to the project area, native plant communities are comprised primarily of sagebrush with an understory of grasses and forbs. Three species listed on the BCC list, sage thrasher, Brewer's sparrow and sage sparrow potentially nest in the general area. A red-tailed hawk nest is located in the vicinity of the Proposed Action.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Sagebrush stands surrounding the mining claim may support some nesting of migratory birds; however, habitat quality has been reduced due to development associated with the mine claim. The Proposed Action would remove structures associated with the mine claim and restore the area to a sagebrush ecosystem. Birds may be displaced during project implementation; however, this would be a temporary disturbance. The project would improve habitat for migratory bird species and would increase the likelihood that the area would be utilized in the future.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: Migratory birds would not be affected.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of Specialist and Date: Desa Ausmus, 3/9/10

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

A letter was sent to the Eastern Shoshone, Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council on May 26, 2009. The letter listed the FY2010 projects that the BLM would notify them on and projects that would not require notification. A follow-up phone call was performed on July 26, 2009. No comments were received (Letter on file at the Little Snake Field Office). This project requires no additional notification.

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 6/30/10

PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS

Affected Environment: No prime and/or unique Farmlands are present within the proposed project areas.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigation Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 3/2/10

T&E AND SENSITIVE ANIMALS

Affected Environment: There are no ESA listed or proposed species that inhabit or derive important benefit from the project area. The general area provides habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM sensitive species and a candidate for ESA listing. The area provides nesting and winter habitat for this species. The closest active lek is approximately 1.5 miles away from the mine site.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Sagebrush stands surrounding the site may support greater sage-grouse; however, habitat quality has been reduced due to development and structures associated with the mine claim. The Proposed Action would remove structures associated with the mine claim and restore the area to a sagebrush ecosystem. Any sage-grouse in the vicinity of the mine claim may be displaced during project implementation; however, this would be a temporary disturbance. The project would improve habitat for greater sage-grouse and would increase the likelihood that the area would be utilized in the future.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: The reclamation would not take place and the area would remain unsuitable for sage-grouse.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of Specialist and Date: Desa Ausmus, 3/10/10

T&E AND SENSITIVE PLANTS

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species within or in the vicinity of the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 3/5/10

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: A Hazardous Materials survey was conducted. There is one 55-gallon drum considered hazardous materials, which will be removed prior to reclamation in the project area.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: There is the potential that oil or coolants could be released from equipment, however the potential for this to occur is small. If a release does occur, the environment affected would be dependent on the nature and volume of material released. In most every situation involving hazardous materials, there are ways to remediate the area that has been contaminated. Short-term consequences would occur, but they can be remedied, and long-term impacts would be minimal. If there are no releases, there would be no impact on the environment.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: There would be no potential for release. The 55-gallon drum of hazardous materials would not be removed, posing a threat to human health and safety and the environment.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Jennifer Maiolo, 3/22/10

WATER QUALITY – GROUND

Affected Environment: The proposed reclamation is for surface structures. No subsurface work is planned. Ground water will not be affected.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Marty O'Mara 3/23/10

WATER QUALITY – SURFACE

Affected Environment: Surface runoff from the project area flows into Timberlake Creek, which is tributary to Fourmile Creek approximately four miles downstream. Fourmile Creek is then tributary to the Little Snake River over four miles downstream of this confluence. There are no stream classifications and water quality standards for Timberlake Creek, however all tributaries to the Little Snake River (from a point immediately below the confluence with Fourmile Creek to the Yampa River) are use protected and must support Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation N, and Agriculture beneficial uses.

There are no Section 303(d) water quality limited (impaired) segments within the area potentially influenced by the project area, however as of 2008 all tributaries to the Little Snake River are on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Monitoring and Evaluation List for suspected *E. coli* and iron water quality issues (CDPHE 2008). This list identifies water bodies where there is reason to suspect water quality problems, but there is uncertainty regarding one or more factors, such as source of the problem or the representative nature of the data indicating that an issue exists.

A small, unauthorized concrete dam was constructed in Timberlake Creek by the mining claimant to channel water into a ditch that was used for placer mining operations east of the creek. This dam would be removed as part of the site restoration.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The proposed project area is over four miles upstream of a primary tributary to the Little Snake River. Restoration of the site as proposed will not exacerbate existing *E. coli* or iron issues further downstream. The removal of the small concrete dam in Timberlake Creek would cause localized sedimentation and turbidity, but this impact would be short-term. In addition to the project design features to reduce bank side erosion and sedimentation that could degrade water quality both at the site and further downstream, care should be taken to keep stream substrate intact to the extent possible.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: This alternative would have no further effect on water quality.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 4/8/10

Reference: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Water Quality Control Commission. 2008. Regulations #33, 37, 93 and 94. http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/regulations/wqccregs/index.html

WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

Affected Environment: The proposed project area includes ~ 1 mile of Timberlake Creek (reaches 6 & 7) as well as three springs and a ~ 1 acre wetland complex. The springs are located within or near the ditch (site A) and have not had a condition assessment performed to date. Timberlake Creek was assessed in 2003 and found to be 'functioning at risk' with an improving trend. The wetland complex, also assessed in 2003 and found to be 'functioning at risk' with an improving trend, is east of site A and is not included for restoration at this time; however, it is within the general project area.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Removing the dam on Timberlake Creek would cause a reduction in wetland and riparian community extent in the short-term, however it would allow natural riparian processes, such as sediment transport and flooding, to eventually resume as they were prior to the dam construction. The springs and wetland complex would be assessed and clearly flagged prior to the start of work so that they would not be inadvertently buried or compacted during the course of reclamation. Sediment fences or strawbales/waddles will be installed where necessary for added protection. Depending on the condition of the springs, seeding and/or more permanent fencing may be necessary to promote stability. Following the project design features will minimize project impacts to riparian and wetland areas.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Although temporary surface disturbance to riparian and wetland areas would not occur under this alternative, over the long term riparian integrity would continue to degrade, eventually causing downstream reaches of Timberlake Creek to not meet riparian and land health standards.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 4/8/10

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: Not Present

Environmental Consequences: Not Applicable

Mitigative Measures: Not Applicable

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison, 3/3/10

WSAs, WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

Affected Environment: Not Present

Environmental Consequences: Not Applicable

Mitigative Measures: Not Applicable

Name of specialist and date: Gina Robison, 3/3/10

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

SOILS

Affected Environment: The table below (Table 1) describes the floodplain and associated terrace/bench soil groups included within the Ace #7 Cleanup Project Area. In general, the soils in the area are restricted to use as rangeland, forestland, and/or wildlife habitat. Limitations or hazards include very dry climate conditions, erosion unless close-growing plant cover is maintained, and shallow, droughty, or stony soils.

Table 1. Soil Summary for the Ace #7 Cleanup Project Area

Soil Map Unit (MU) & Soil Name (Acres in Allot.)	Map Unit Setting	Description
MU 19	*Elevation:* 6,000 – 6,800 feet	These soils are moderately well to well drained with very slow to

Borollic Natrargids-Borollic Haplargids-Ustic Torrifluvents complex, 0 to 20% slopes	*Mean annual precipitation:* 11-15" *Ecological Site:* not given	moderately slow permeability and varying runoff potential. Available water capacity is moderate to high and the soil profile can be up to 60 inches deep.
MU 44 Cowestglen sandy loam, 0 to 3% slopes	*Elevation:* 6,000 – 6,800 feet *Mean annual precipitation:* 11-13" *Ecological Site:* Foothills Swale	These soils are well drained with moderately rapid permeability and very low runoff potential. Available water capacity is moderate and the soil profile is typically 60 inches deep.
MU 173 Ryark-Powderwash complex, 2 to 15 % slopes	*Elevation:* 6,100 – 6,800 feet *Mean annual precipitation:* 11-13" *Ecological Site:* Rolling Loam	These soils are well to somewhat excessively drained with variable permeability rates and runoff potential. Available water capacity is low and the soil profile is typically 42-60 inches deep.

Data taken from *Soil Survey of Moffat County Area, Colorado (2004).*

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Restoration/construction activities that will impact soils include backfilling of the illegal ditch and re-grading/contouring, which could lead to soil compaction, erosion, soil profile mixing, and alternation of surface and subsurface drainage. These activities would cause short-term disturbance to soils and vegetation, however restoration is expected to have a positive effect on overall soil quality and integrity. Establishment of native perennial riparian and upland vegetation would increase soil infiltration, lower the soil bulk density, and improve the quantity and quality of organic matter that may have been compromised as a result of the mining and reclamation disturbance.

In addition to the project design features, soil used for backfill should be from onsite if possible to prevent the accidental introduction of weeds. Also, soil should be excavated, piled in shallow, long mounds, and replaced with minimal mixing so as to keep the profile intact as best as possible. Piles should be occasionally wetted down to minimize wind-blown loss if soil is to be stockpiled for over a week or in excessively windy conditions.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Although temporary disturbance to soils would not occur under this alternative, over the long term soil integrity and function could degrade, eventually causing the site to not meet land health standards.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 4/13/10

UPLAND VEGETATION

Affected Environment: The majority of vegetation types in the area of proposed action are Wyoming big sagebrush. Other vegetation types that occur as minor plant communities

include silver sagebrush/grassland, which occurs in riparian habitat along streams above the wet sedge and willow riparian zone.

Wyoming Big Sagebrush/Grassland: The Wyoming big sagebrush/grassland is the most common vegetation cover type in the project area. It occurs in shallow to moderately deep coarse soil types at lower elevations between 6,000 and 7,500 feet. Grass and forb species vary depending on soil texture, aspect, and slope. Common grass and grass-like species include bluebunch and thick spike wheatgrass, Sandberg and mutton bluegrass, Indian ricegrass, needle-and-thread, threadleaf sedge, and bottlebrush squirreltail. Common forbs include phlox, Hooker sandwort, buckwheat, penstemon, Indian paintbrush, globemallow, and prickly pear cactus.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Implementation of the proposed action would have beneficial impacts to upland vegetation in reseeding the disturbed area with native vegetation supplementing a contiguous landscape. The following reseeding specifications are recommended for the soils and ecological sites in the area of proposed action.

Western wheatgrass (Arriba)	7 lb./ac
Needlandthread	5 lb./ac
Indian ricegrass (Nezpar or Rimrock)	3 lb./ac
Scarlet globemallow	1 lb./ac
Blue flax	1 lb./ac
Winterfat	1 lb./ac

Seeds should be drilled between 1/4 to 1/2 inches.

Seeding should be implemented in mid to late fall.

Environmental Consequences, No Action Alternative: No direct adverse affects to upland vegetation would occur. There would be the potential for the abandoned property to become infested with noxious/invasive species that would eventually spread into and degrade the upland vegetation.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Mark Lowrey, 3/9/10

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL

Affected Environment: Native plant communities in the Proposed Action area are comprised of primarily sagebrush with an understory of grasses and forbs. The general area provides habitat for a variety of big game, small mammals, birds and reptiles.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: All wildlife species using the area are likely to be displaced during project implementation. The surrounding habitat should be sufficient to support mule deer, elk, pronghorn and other terrestrial wildlife that are displaced during project implementation. Most animals would return to undisturbed areas after the project is complete and human activity has decreased. Overall, the Proposed Action would restore the site back to a sagebrush/grass ecosystem and improve habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Wildlife would not be displaced during project implementation. However, the site would not be resorted and wildlife habitat would not be improved.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of Specialist and Date: Desa Ausmus 3/10/10

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS:

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Forest Management	JAM 3/22/10		
Fluid Minerals		EMO 3/23/10	
Hydrology/Ground		EMO 3/23/10	
Hydrology/Surface		ELS 4/8/10	
Paleontology		EMO 3/23/10	
Range Management		ML 03/09/10	
Realty Authorizations		BSB 03/05/10	
Recreation/Transportation		GMR 03/03/10	
Socio-Economics		BSB 03/05/10	
Solid Minerals		JAM 3/22/10	
Visual Resources		GMR 03/03/10	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt		JAM 3/22/10	
Wildlife, Aquatic		DA 3/18/10	

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: The Ace #7 reclamation is located in an area used primarily by wildlife; other uses include grazing, hunting, and casual use mining activities. The duration of the reclamation activities is short, 4 days. The Proposed Action to reclaim the Ace #7 site is compatible with other uses, both historic and present, and would not add any new or detrimental impacts to those already present. Rather, the brief time of disturbance will aid in habitat restoration.

STANDARDS:

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD: The Proposed Action would remove infrastructure associated with the mining claim and restore the area back to a sagebrush/grass ecosystem. This would improve habitat for a variety of wildlife species and would move the area towards meeting this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus, 3/10/10

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal) STANDARD: The project area provides habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM sensitive species and a Candidate for ESA listing. The Proposed Action would remove infrastructure associated with the mining claim and restore the area back to a sagebrush/grass ecosystem. This would improve habitat for greater sage-grouse and would move the area towards meeting this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus, 3/10/10

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant) STANDARD: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species within or in the vicinity of the proposed action. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 3/5/10

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD: In 2003 the allotment that contains the project area was assessed for land health standards in three different locations. This standard was met at all three locations. This standard would continue to be met with implementation of the proposed action.

Name of specialist and date: Mark Lowrey, 5/19/10

RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD: The Proposed Action would remove the dam infrastructure associated with the mining claim and restore Timberlake Creek. Restoration would move the area towards meeting this standard by improving overall riparian function and processes.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 4/13/10

WATER QUALITY STANDARD: This standard is currently being met, however there are suspected water quality issues with *E.coli* and iron further downstream of the project area. The proposed action will not exacerbate any existing *E. coli* or iron issues further downstream.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 4/13/10

UPLAND SOILS STANDARD: The Proposed Action would remove infrastructure associated with the mining claim and restore the upland area back to a sagebrush/grass ecosystem and Timberlake Creek to a functioning riparian system. Revegetation as proposed will move the area towards meeting this standard as upland and riparian soil function and integrity is restored.

Name of specialist and date: Emily Spencer, 4/13/10

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
EA CO-100-2010-0048EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA and all other available information, I have determined that the proposal and the alternatives analyzed do not constitute a major Federal action that would adversely impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is unnecessary and will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Little Snake Resource Area and adjacent land.

2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.

3. There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplain, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas, or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.

5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.

6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other actions that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State, or local natural resource related plans, policies, or programs.

7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.

8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural surveys, and through mitigation by avoidance, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and adversely affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice Policy.

9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act were identified. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, treatments would be modified or mitigated not to have an adverse effect or new analysis would be conducted.

10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

COMPLIANCE PLAN(S):

Compliance Schedule
Compliance will be conducted during the entire reclamation phase to insure that all terms and conditions specified in the contract are followed.

Assignment of Responsibility
Responsibility for implementation of the compliance schedule and monitoring plan will be assigned to the Solid Mineral staff in the Little Snake Field Office. The primary inspector will be the Mining Engineer, but the Natural Resource Specialist, Contracting Office Representative, and the Law Enforcement Officer will also be involved.

SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:

DATE SIGNED:

SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:

DATE SIGNED:

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

DATE SIGNED: